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LETTER
to the
EDITOR

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I was pleased that *Psi News* published my and William Braud's short articles on the effects of immediate feedback on psi in the October 1981 issue, as this is an important research area in our field. I would like to correct two possibly misleading implications in the editorial introduction to the two pieces, however. First, I have never postulated that feedback is necessary for psi to manifest *per se*. Second, and more important, Braud and I are not in any major disagreement about current empirical results concerning feedback. He looked at them from a different perspective, one in keeping with a largely implicit model that I think is, unfortunately, too dominant in parapsychology. I shall call it the "unconscious control" model. I do not know how much Braud would agree with this model when I make it explicit, but I think it will be useful to flesh it out. I will sketch it and another model in a more extreme form than I think many colleagues subscribe to, in order to make some points more clearly.

The unconscious control model sees man as a very complex psychological being, with psi potential being incapable of direct conscious control, subject only to complex and indirect effects that are mediated in largely unknown (and perhaps unknowable) actions of the unconscious mind. Conscious control is thus

impossible, and the best we can do is try to induce a "psi conducive mood," hoping that our conscious experimental manipulations affect the percipient's unconscious mind in the right way so that his unconscious will sometimes activate the percipient's psi faculties.

I believe the unconscious control model has become strongly associated with another all-too-dominant implicit model, which we might humorously call the "itsy bitsy bias" model. In this model the nature of psi is such that all it can do is produce quite small biases in otherwise random processes.

The combined outlook provided by this unconscious control and itsy bitsy bias model is that the depressing aspects of contemporary parapsychological research, namely unreliable, statistically significant, but practically trivial psi effects, are all that we can ever expect. Attempts to study the nature of psi are thus inherently inefficient and frustrating, as the vast majority of experiments produce almost all "noise," with very little psi "signal."

As a psychologist I am very aware of the powerful way in which explicit and implicit expectations influence people's behavior so they tend to get the reality they expect to get. Thus I find the implicit dominance of these two models a poor omen for parapsychology.

The unconscious control model is certainly a good post hoc description of most of what happens in parapsychological laboratories today. Insofar as we are content to let that remain as a sole guiding model, Braud's cautions about how feedback can disrupt psi conducive states, and his related points, are well taken. If I had a percipient in my lab who was showing some psi results, who needed to stay in the right mood, who wasn't interested in making a long-term commitment to learning conscious control of psi, and who found immediate feedback disruptive, I would certainly eliminate feedback to them and try to learn something from what they could do while it lasted. If, on the other hand, I believe that unconscious control and itsy bitsy bias were all we could ever get, I would find a more promising field to work in than parapsychology.

My feedback training approach is aimed at producing percipients closer to D.D. Home than to those who score a fraction of a percent above chance. Many of Braud's suggestions for making feedback less disruptive can be profitably utilized for this aim. I may be aiming too high: perhaps psi is inherently uncontrollable and itsy bitsy. Research will tell. If I am right about the potentials of immediate feedback training, though, parapsychology will make a quantum leap forward into a new era, based on high-intensity, reliable psi manifestation, and questions about the nature of psi become answerable in an efficient way. If I am wrong, the future of parapsychology leaves much to be desired.

SURVEY

In his class last semester at Citrus College (Azusa, CA), Mike J. Nanko conducted a small survey to investigate the frequency of reported psi experiences among members of his Psychological Research class. Of the 92 total respondents, the frequency was 29% for GESP, 16% for precognition, 7% for precognitive dreams, 2% for poltergeist experiences, 3% for out-of-the-body experiences with psi-like information, and 13% for apparitions or "spirit" contact. 14% reported no psi experiences.

Southern California SPR
Distinguished Achievement

The Southern California Society for Psychological Research has awarded its Distinguished Achievement Award for 1980 to Gertrude R. Schmeidler, Ph.D., it was announced by Dr. Elizabeth McAdams, president of the Society. Previous distinguished achievement awards, the only such award conferred by a major psychological research organization, were given to Drs. Karlis Osis and Raymond A. Moody.

The SCSPR award is given in recognition of significant contribution to the field of parapsychology.

Dr. Schmeidler, a member of the faculty of the psychology department of the City College of New York and a resident of Hastings-on-the-Hudson, N.Y., is the author of the book *ESP in Personality Patterns* and numerous published research papers. One of the earliest researchers in experimental parapsychology, she worked with the late Dr. Gardner Murphy, researched Rorschach testing and ESP, directed PK experiments with thermisters with psychic Ingo Swann, etc..

THE HUMANISTIC
PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTE

by Rosemarie Tomatore

For someone seriously interested in pursuing a career in Parapsychology, the Humanistic Psychology Institute offers programs worth examining. HPI has an M.A. program in Psychology and Ph.D. programs in Psychology and Humanistic Sciences. Students can incorporate psi research into some required courses, such as "Experimental Research Design" or "Science and Psychology." Dr. Stanley Krippner oversees studies in Consciousness, Parapsychology, and related topics; students can complete courses of study in these areas. Under Dr. Krippner's guidance, students can also write a dissertation on some area of Parapsychology.

HPI was founded in 1970 by the Association for Humanistic Psychology (AHP) to promote and explore humanistic psychology in an educational design encouraging individual achievement and emphasizing independent study. It is ideal for the highly self-motivated student interested in developing an independent learning program. Since it is nonresidential, students can continue professional careers while doing course work, selecting learning resources in their own communities.

The Institute offers an M.A. in Psychology for students who want to enter the doctoral program but lack background in the field. Applicants must have either a B.A. in Psychology, a closely related field, or an acceptable G.R.E. score on the Advanced Psychology Exam. Upon successfully completing the M.A. program, students become eligible to continue in the nonresidential Psychology Ph.D. program. In this program students must complete 60-72 semester units, pass the Psychology doctoral qualifying exam, complete a dissertation, and pass a final oral exam on the dissertation. A minimum period of 2 years in the doctoral program is required. The Institute accepts equivalent graduate credit from other educational institutions.

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